The Stewardship of Christian Business Men.*

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In considering this topic I will confine myself to three particular points: recognition, enlargement, results. I do not believe there is any greater need in the Church to-day among our laymen than to recognize their stewardship, for many thousands of them everywhere are not recognizing it, and therefore they have made no personal contribution worthy of the name to the work of the Church for that very reason.

How many laymen to-day are really breadwinners in the Church of God? How many are doing active service in the Church that brings general results? How many business men in our Churches are investing definitely their time and their money, to any considerable extent, in the work of the Church? How many laymen have believed and do believe that there is an actual need for their service just as any artisan or tradesman believes there is a place for his business and his work? How many of our laymen, in joining the Church, actually ask for a place of service in the Church? . . . I do believe that the one great need of the Church to-day is a contribution of personal service from every mature man in the Church.

God holds us responsible for our stewardship. Each one of us has a particular place, and it seems to me it is a wise thing that we have come together to in-

*Address delivered at the Laymen's Missionary Conference, Knoxville, Tenn., September 18, 1907.

augurate some definite and intelligent kind of work for the unworking thousands in our Churches; and when we get them not only to doing work themselves but giving a contagion of it to all about them, we may well look for a season that we have not yet had.

Enlargement of Stewardship.

If we have caught the sense of responsibility and recognized it, then I want to say there is a place for enlargement. There are no men here who would be satisfied with just covering the same little territory and doing exactly the same volume of business year after year. In the business world we call that "drying up commercially." Is it not perfectly natural and according to the best business experience that a man will lay plans for the enlargement of his business year by year? And yet many of us are not applying that rule to our Christian work. We need, as Christian business men, in the sight of God, to seek to enlarge the business of God's Church. Ought we not to strive to bring about better results, to cover more territory and do a larger volume of business for him each year, just as we seek to do it for ourselves?

It is a further fact that a business man not only endeavors to enlarge the volume of his business and the territory covered, but he is also very wide awake as to enlarging his own capacity for service. I do not know any enterprising business man in my whole acquaintance who is not studying, taking journals, reading text-books, all sorts of literature, in order that he may enlarge his own personal capacity for the business

in which he is engaged. Why can we not apply the same clear-headed business rule to our Christian work? It would show good sense on the part of Christian business men to do the very same thing; and if we are really in dead earnest about it, we will do it. Each one of us ought, in furthering the interests of God, to enlarge our capacity for service that we may work better for him.

Training Needed.

Why should there not be a training corps in the Church for level-headed, mature business men? How many men in our Churches are ready at a moment's notice to offer public prayer? If a man is a sensible, Christian business man, used to handling the affairs of this world, it seems to me that he ought to be willing and ready to offer prayer at any time in public. And yet, if you will think about it, there are very few even in a large membership who are ready at the call of the pastor to offer public prayer and to do it to edification.

How many men in your congregation can intelligently and clearly point a man to God, if he is asked to do it? Surely, as clear-headed business men, earnest men, men who are in the Church because they love God and because they want to serve him and do it intelligently, there ought to be a great body of laymen who could do that, and it seems to me that one of the purposes of this great lay movement is in that direction along with the other lay interests that we are to conserve. . . . The inconsistent part of it is

this: that the very men we have in our Churches who cannot or will not undertake to lead a service are the very men who can take a man and, in the most clear and definite way, explain to him why he ought to invest in certain things, and they get him interested and he will put his money into them. They are thus converting people to business ventures. Ought we not to be just as ready to convert them to the higher and nobler investments of life?

It is really to our shame that many of us know more about the countries where the balance of trade affects our country for good or adversely than we do about the countries where great missions have been for years, and maybe the missions of our own Church.

The Result of Enlargement of Stewardship.

In business parlance, when a man is enterprising and when he is diligent and when things come to pass, we call that success. Now, the very same laws obtain in Christian work, and the very same ratio of success, or even greater, would come to us if we were just as diligent about the King's business as we are about our own.

It surprises me greatly to see how level-headed business men, who know that real effort is necessary to secure success in any worthy undertaking of a particular kind—it is surprising how these very same men will think that in some way, without any seeming effort, God will bring to pass success in the direction of his work. Sometimes the very enthusiastic faith that is exhibited in regard to the undertaking of purely

worldly affairs is wholly lacking in the things that pertain to God's kingdom.

It is to consider these things first as we find them, and then to try to bring about such a condition as we hope will greatly remedy them, that we are here today.

Emergency Men.

Now, if we had a great company of laymen recognizing their stewardship and seeking to enlarge it, that could be relied upon at a moment's notice to undertake great things for God and expect great things for God—if we had such a company as that (with our marvelous polity we ought to have ten thousand men easily)—ten thousand emergency men, men who could be called upon at any time to undertake anything for God—we would bring things to pass. We have fully five hundred thousand laymen in our Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It seems to me it would be exceedingly small to say that we should not have more than ten thousand men ready to be called upon at any time, to have their names recorded at headquarters with the understanding that they belong to a great cohort that would be expected to respond in a reasonable way at any time to the call of the Church. Suppose you wanted to raise fifty thousand dollars, what little trouble that would be if we had ten thousand men who were willing to help us because they loved the Church of God and because they were already doing service in their own particular Churches and because they understood the commands of God's

Church! Suppose we had ten thousand men (which would be a very small percentage) that could be called upon for an average of five dollars apiece—why, with such a company that could be called upon over and over again we could do the great things that are coming to us with the open doors that are constantly beckoning us to enter. It would be indeed a thrilling service to belong to such a company as that, to feel that you were one of ten thousand picked men of the Church who could any day be called upon to respond in a way that was possible. There is not a man before me who would not be glad to make such a response if he belonged to such a company as that.

The Contagion of Enthusiasm.

Would it not be a great result if we would fully recognize this morning our stewardship of God's goods. And if we set about diligently to enlarge the ability that he has given any of us as business men to do the business of God's Church, don't you see what results it would bring?

Why, here is our good Bishop Candler wearing out his nerves trying to raise $20,000 for the work in Songdo, in Korea. It is one of the finest opportunities we have had in years, and yet it is quite an undertaking for any man to go out and raise any comparatively large amount. But suppose Bishop Candler had ten thousand men to call upon for the Songdo fund this morning, what a simple proposition it would be! He ought to get it within a week without any trouble at all. Now, that is the idea I have of this laymen's

movement that we are met here together to consider; and that would be one of the legitimate results.

Another result would be that the givers would be blessed in giving, so much more than the receivers, just according to that law that has been in the world always—"It is more blessed to give than to receive." Why, there would be such a contagion about it that it would run all over and the whole Church would catch it. It would result not only in these little gifts that I have talked about, these little average gifts, but it would result in great, big, worthy gifts from a great many people, some of whom would be within the bounds of this company, and others would not be, but it would be a result of contagion. I think it would generate enthusiasm over the whole Church if it were known that ten thousand emergency men were enrolled for service.

We want not less than ten thousand men—men whose names are recorded at headquarters and to whom these urgent appeals can be sent at any time. I do not think it is any stretch of faith at all to believe that we have that many men who would gladly serve in that capacity. If anybody else wanted to come in, we would not bar them out, but we want a company, a great company of men, as a result of the real recognition of their stewardship in God's Church, and as a real desire to do bigger things for God. We want not less than ten thousand men who will stand ready to respond to any reasonable call that may be made by the Church at any time.

Royal Givers.

I have a conviction that if we are to ever have royal givers (and that is what we want; we want royal givers, because we have a royal God to give to, because his blessings have been royal to us; we want royal givers; and if we are to ever have them, in my opinion, we can have them in a reasonably short time) it will be because we set in motion an intelligent campaign of education and agitation and growth. They are going to be grown; it won't take very long to grow them if we get very much in earnest about it. But I do believe that it is possible, and that it is incumbent upon us as business men, as Christian men of the Church, to lay plans and to start an intelligent, aggressive, enterprising campaign in the interest of royal givers. It must come alone by education and agitation and inspiration, and God will give them to us; and if we set in motion here such a plan as that, every man will feel: "I am dealing with God's goods as a steward, and I will recognize my stewardship under him. I will not only say that I am a steward and I recognize his authority over me, but I will seek by the help of God to enlarge whatever powers I may have for the administration of this stewardship; and if I do that, God will give the results that will honor him and will honor the Church." Brethren, I believe it in my heart—everything I have said to you.